

Message Text

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PAGE 01 THE HA 02984 011440Z
ACTION EUR-12

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FM AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2731
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E.O. 11652: NA
TAGS: PINT NL
SUBJECT: DUTCH MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS MAY 31 LEAVE NATIONAL
POLITICAL BALANCE UNALTERED

1. RELATIVELY LARGE NUMBERS (70 PERCENT) OF DUTCH VOTERS
TURNED OUT IN UNCHARACTERISTICALLY BEAUTIFUL WEATHER IN
THE NETHERLANDS MAY 31 TO VOTE FOR LEADERS IN MORE THAN 800
MUNICIPALITIES. (THE TURNOUT WAS LESS THAN THE 87 PERCENT FOR
1977 NATIONAL ELECTIONS BUT UNUSUAL FOR LOCAL CONTESTS.)
THE RESULTS HAVE NO DIRECT IMPACT ON THE NATIONAL LEVEL--
MUCH LESS THAN THE MARCH PROVINCIAL ELECTIONS--BUT A LIMITED
READING ON THE RELATIVE POPULARITY OF NATIONAL PARTIES IS
POSSIBLE.

2. THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS (CDA) GAINED, CONTINUING THE
TREND BEGUN IN THE NATIONAL ELECTIONS OF 1977 THAT REVERSED
EARLIER CONFESSONAL PARTY LOSSES. BASED ON A COMPARISON
OF VOTING IN 169 MUNICIPALITIES REPRESENTING 57 PERCENT OF
THE POPULATION, CDA RECEIVED 32.0 PERCENT COMPARED TO
30.7 PERCENT FOR THE OPPOSITION LABOR PARTY (PVDA). THE
COALITION PARTNER LIBERALS (VVD) RECEIVED ONLY 15.9 PERCENT,
WHILE DEMOCRATS 1966 (D'66) CAME THROUGH WITH 5.7 PERCENT.
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PAGE 02 THE HA 02984 011440Z

SMALLER PARTIES PLAYED LARGER ROLES IN INDIVIDUAL MUNICIPALITIES
BUT DISPLAYED NO NATIONAL SIGNIFICANCE.

3. BEARING IN MIND THAT AT LEAST HALF OF THE VOTERS CHOSE
THEIR PARTIES ON THE BASIS OF LOCAL ISSUES--I.E. ZONING,
STOPLIGHTS, SCHOOL BUILDINGS--THE RESULTS BEAR LITTLE MORE
INTERPRETATION THAN A CONFIRMATION OF THE NATIONAL POLITICAL

BALANCE FAVORING THE COALITION OF CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS AND
LIBERALS. HOWEVER, CDA'S IMPROVED POSITION RELATIVE TO THE
PVDA MAY ALSO BE SEEN AS A TENDENCY FOR THE DUTCH VOTER ON
LOCAL ISSUES TO FAVOR LESS CONFRONTATIONAL POLITICS THAN THOSE
OF THE LABOR PARTY.
BROWN

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